

The Gradation of Sin both in Principles and Practice.

A
SERMON
Preach'd before the
University of OXFORD,
At St. MARY's,
On the Thirtieth of January, 1709.¹⁰.

Wherein One of Mr. HOADLY's principal
Arguments against the *Doctrine of Non-Resistance of
the Supreme Powers* is occasionally consider'd.

2 K I N G S viij. 13.

Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?

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2 K I N G S V I I I . 1 3 .

Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?

TH E S E are the Words of *Hazael* to the Prophet *Elisha*, when he foretold his Advancement to the Throne of *Syria*, and his barbarous and inhumane Treatment of the Children of *Israel*.

The Story is very remarkable. For first, that tender Love and Concern, which it is natural for a good Man always to retain for his own Country, however idolatrous and wicked, is described by the Prophet's looking so wishfully upon *Hazael*, and falling into Tears at the dismal Prospect of the things which were shortly to befall his own People the Children of *Israel*, at the 11th and 12th Verses. *And he settled his Countenance stedfastly until he was ashamed: and the Man of God wept.* *And Hazael said, Why weepeth my Lord? And he answered, Because I know the Evil that thou wilt do unto the Children of Israel. Their strong Holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young Men wilt thou slay with the Sword, and wilt dash their Children, and rip up their Women with Child.* It was this View of his Country's Calamities, that occasion'd the Prophet's Tears, which *Hazael* wondered at, not knowing the Cause of them. Secondly, from *Hazael's* Reply to the Prophet, we may observe that he was greatly surprized and shocked at the bare Mention of the Barbarities he was to commit, and seem'd to entertain *Elisha's* Prediction with Abhorrence as well as Amazement. *But what? Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?* As if he had said, Do you take me for a Man of so fierce and unrelenting a Nature, that I should ever take Delight in such strange Inhumanities; in murdering poor harmless Infants, and ripping up helpless Women big with Child? Supposing I had Power, can you imagine me to be so rocky and hard-hearted, so perfectly void of the common Sentiments of Humanity, as to execute such monstrous Cruelties even upon my most bitter and irreconcileable Enemies?

Now

Now tho' we do not find afterwards an Historical and exact account of his particular Actions of this kind, yet frequent Notice is taken of his Oppressions of the *Israelites* in general, in the History of the Lives of the Kings of *Israel*, who sat upon that Throne during the Time that he was King of *Syria*. And particularly in the 13th Chapter of this Book, at the 7th Verse, we find that *Israel* was once reduced to a very inconsiderable Body indeed, and that *their King Jehoahaz had but fifty Horsemen, and ten Chariots, and ten thousand Footmen*: the Reason of which is there given; because the King of *Syria* (which was this very Person *Hazaël*) *had destroy'd them, and had made them like the dust by Threshing*, as it is there express'd. So that there is not the least Reason to doubt, but that he fully accomplish'd afterwards what the Prophet foretold then of him.

Now the Observation I would make from this Example, as pertinent to the present Occasion, is this: That in a long Course of Wickedness it comes to pass, that Men are at last reconciled to what they formerly abhor'd, whilst their natural Notions of Good and Evil remained clear and distinct, and their Minds were as yet upright and unperverted. It was a very wise saying of the Latin Poet,

Nemo repente fuit turpissimus. — Juv. Sat. 2.

For a perfect Villain, as well as a perfect good Man, is the work of some Time. He starts not up like a Mushroom in a day or two, or like *Jonah's Gourd* that sprang up in a Night. A regular Progress must be made, and certain Stages from bad to worse are necessary to be run thro'. And this is true as well with Respect to Men's Principles as their Practices. Nor indeed is it otherwise to be conceived how Men ever prevail with themselves to commit Acts of very notorious and exemplary Villany, till they have changed and confounded, or at least extremely defaced and darkned their natural Notions of Virtue and Vice. Having laid down the foregoing Observation from the Instance in my Text, I shall endeavour to illustrate the Truth of it.

First, by shewing whence it is that Men become reconciled both to those Opinions and Practices, which once they could not think on without Horror and Detestation.

Secondly, by proving it true in Fact, and giving Instances of it in Respect to Both. And in doing this, I shall have regard partly to the Rebellion in these Kingdoms, on account of which we are now met to humble our selves before God, and partly to the present Times.

First, I am to shew whence it comes to pass, that Men once unprejudic'd in their Judgments, and sincere in their Intentions, become in Tract of Time reconciled to those wicked Opinions and Practices which formerly they could not think, or hear of without Horror and Detestation. But here I do not intend to give an Account of the several Prejudices and Mischiefs arising from Education, Humour, Lust of Power, Profit, or Pleasure ; each of which is apt to incline a Man to think and do wickedly at one Time or another, but only to suggest the general Causes and Reasons of Men's total Defection from Sincerity and Uprightness in their Dealings, and from their *first* and *best* Notions of Right and Wrong.

It is hard to say whether Men's Principles and Opinions have a greater Influence on their Practice, or their Practice on their Principles and Opinions ; Or to discover always from which of these the Corruption begins in particular Persons. For sometimes Men are debauch'd in their Lives and Manners first, and so seeking to defend themselves by false Reasoning, embrace Error : at others their Minds are first secretly poisoned by some one or more false Opinions, and they act in pursuance of them ; and so fall into great Impieties, and greater Absurdities in Opinion. But it matters not to my present Purpose whence the mischief originally flows, provided it be true, that by either of these ways Men's Judgments may in time be so far perverted, that they will neither boggle at the Commission of the greatest Villanies, nor strain in swallowing down the most damnable Doctrines and Tenets. And this is certainly true. For there is a certain Proneness and Declivity in Evil ; a Descent by Steps, which altho' it be not so steep that Men come to the bottom presently, yet does not easily admit of a stop without turning back, and taking the quite contrary Course. The Reasons of this Declivity are,

First,

First, because one Sin, or one wicked Opinion, is naturally the Cause of another.

First, One Sin naturally draws another after it. This is matter of daily Observation. How frequent is it with us to deny what we have done amiss, and to cover our selves from the shame and punishment of our other Faults by Falshood and Lying? How common to defend our fraudulent and wrongful Dealings by Violence, and fresh instances of Injustice, to justify Slander by Detraction, and Disobedience by Rebellion? How many Murders have been occasioned by a fit of Intemperance in drinking? How many Thefts have sprang from Prodigality or Avarice? How much Lewdness and Debauchery from Excess and riotous Living? Thus, as the *Psalmist* elegantly expresses it, *we fall from one wickedness to another*: And the Commission of one Crime lays us under a kind of Necessity and Obligation to sin on, in order to keep up our Interest and Reputation with a Party, or to defend what we have done already, and maintain a Consistency and Uniformity in our Actions.

This Matter cannot perhaps be better illustrated, than by the Instance of a Sinner, who by cool and sober Reflections, and the Assistance of Divine Grace, being brought to a true Sense of his unhappy Condition, and possessed of strong Resolutions to forsake his former sins, in earnest sets about the great and necessary Work of Reformation. It is hardly possible to imagine what mighty Obstructions and shrewd Temptations such a one constantly meets with from his former Sins, through the whole Course of his Repentance. Let us consider this Matter a little. What Answer shall he give to his old Friends and Companions, when they upbraid him with his Desertion, and solicit him with all their Power to return to his former unlawful Pleasures and Recreations? If his Fortunes are broken by his former Luxury and Extravagance, how shall he get himself a Livelihood without the base Arts of Flattery and Obssequiousness? If he has contracted Debts and Obligations beyond his ability to satisfy, how shall he put off the numerous Train of his Creditors and Attendants at the Time appointed, without

Prevarication and breaking his Word ? If he has entered into any secret Combination to execute some desperate and dark contrivance, how shall he quit his Design, and shake off his Accomplices without endangering his safety ? These and a Thousand like Difficulties lie in the Penitent's Way ; And if he does not happily provide against them by a prudent Care and Foresight, will soon unsettle his Purpose of Amendment, vanquish his most solemn Vows and Engagements, and make all his Resolutions fall before them.

Nor is this close Connexion and Dependance to be found only amongst the *Acts* of Sin, but the *Habits* also. There is a certain Chain that links together the Vices as well as the Virtues. Insomuch that when a Man contracts a Habit of one Vice, he at the same time contracts Dispositions and Tendencies at least towards others, which gathering Strength by Time easily improve into Habits, and then are apt again to multiply their kind, and to beget new Tendencies and Dispositions to Sin. So that it is the vainest thing imaginable for a Man, whilst he persists resolutely in sinning, to think to be just as wicked as he pleases, to circumscribe and set Bounds to his Iniquity, and to say, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.*

And thus it is with Respect to Men's *Principles* too, as well as their *Practices*. For one corrupt Doctrine or Opinion is a strong Byass upon the Understanding, continually drawing it off to a greater Distance from Truth ; and extensing it self to other (no less pernicious) Consequences, which also lead on to more distant Falshoods. And tho' the Progress and Growth of dangerous and sinful Errors is sometimes quicker, at others more slow, according to the different Constitutions of Men, and the Temper of the Soil in which they are planted ; yet there is always the same Tendency in them, tho' they do not always produce Effects equally lively and visible, by Reason of some accidental Obstructions and Indispositions in the Persons receiving them. Add to this, that a false and corrupt Opinion, if it happens to be attacqued, usually stands in need of several others to defend it, without the Assistance of which it cannot possibly maintain its Ground ; and therefore there is a Necessity of embracing them for its sake.

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A Second obvious Reason of this Proneness and Declivity in Sin, is, because wicked Principles have a mighty Influence on Men's Lives and Actions to make them wicked too: And, on the other hand, a corrupt and vicious Life naturally corrupts and blinds the Understanding, and by a kind of Reaction fills the Mind with erroneous and damnable Opinions. So that there is a mutual and double Propagation both of Sin and Error. For Error does not only produce Error, but Sin; and Sin does not produce Sin only, but Error also. And as it is an infallible Maxim of Divine Truth, that *Men therefore love Darkness rather than Light*, (that is, greedily embrace Ignorance and Error) because their Deeds are evil, Joh. 3. 19. So it is true also, that Men's Deeds are therefore evil, because they love Darkness rather than Light; that is, because they have embraced false and damnable Opinions. But I shall not insist any longer on this now.

The last Reason I shall assign of this Declivity of Sin, is, because the Holy Spirit of God gradually withdraws his kind and blessed Influence from Sinners, and at last leaves them to act without controul according to their own wicked Imaginations. Every Abuse of the Divine Grace does in some degree grieve and vex the Holy Spirit, which is the Author of it, and makes him retire farther from us. But then he is patient and long-suffering; waits upon our Hardness and Impenitency, and labours to soften and reclaim us, and never totally deserts us, till after very many and very sore Provocations. But when we have persisted a long Time in our Obstinacy and Perverseness, and have corrupted our Understandings as well as our Lives, then, small hopes of our Reformation appearing, he begins to cease struggling and striving with us, till in the End he utterly casts us off, absolutely refusing to mis-spend the precious means of Salvation any more upon us. And when we are left thus wholly to our Selves, and given up to a Reprobate sense, what can be expected but that like the Heathens of old, of which St. Paul speaks, we should *work all uncleanness, and all manner of other Impieties, with greediness?* Eph. 4. 19. This is the worst Condition in which Men can possibly be in this Life.

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For (Heb. 10.26,27.) there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin; but a fearful looking for of fiery Indignation to consume such presumptuous Despisers of God's Grace and Goodness. Then Men sin of absolute Necessity, and yet must give account, and answer severely for all their Thoughts and Actions, tho' they are not now at Liberty, because they were antecedently free.

Thus having shewn the general Causes and Reasons of that Declivity in Sin, whereby it comes to pass that Men are at last reconciled to those things, they once detested and abhorred; which was my first General Head. I come,

Secondly, to give some Instances of it, both with Respect to the Practices and Opinions of Men.

As to the first I shall need to say the less, because it is easy to say so much. When the Parliament was called in Forty-one, there were few that came to it with premeditated and settled Resolutions to attempt the Dissolution of the Government, and remove the antient Foundations either of Church or State.

In the House o' Lords, the Earl of Essex had not long before this performed the Expedition he was sent upon by the King against the Scots with exact Conduct and Fidelity, and yet he was made afterwards General of the Rebel's Army. And it is a great Question whether Pym, the first Mover of Sedition, and chief Leader of the furious Party in the other House, had laid at that Time half that Mischief which he afterwards effected. This at least is certain, that if he had communicated any such wicked Intentions to his blind Followers, most of them would have fled from him as from the Pestilence; and he would have appeared as odious and loathsome to them, as he did afterwards to his Servants and nearest Relations, when by the just Judgment of God he lay languishing of that strange and abominable Distemper, that put an End both to his Villany and Life.

Every one that reads but with ordinary Attention the incomparable History of that Unnatural Rebellion, with the noble Author's just and useful Remarques upon the several Steps and Passages of it, can't but see and observe how those who at first had hardly any ill Designs, nor suspected others of having, came by Degrees to be involved in the worst:

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And that several of those who were modest and reserved Rebels in Forty-one, in Forty-eight sat with impudent Faces in the High Court of Justice, as they were pleased to call it; and to the eternal Reproach and Dishonour of the Christian, as well as English Name, sign'd a Deed of that monstrous Nature, so prodigiously wicked, that as bad as the World ever was, or is, stands alone, (God be thanked) as yet without Precedent or Parallel in History. What future Times may produce when the same Principles are encouraged, and the same Methods are again pursued, God only knows.

Nor, Secondly, would it be more difficult to give Examples of the prodigious growth of ill Principles out of the History of the same Times, were not our own as proper to furnish us with them.

I shall give one which respects Submission to the Sovereign Power of a Nation, and that shall serve instead of many. Every one knows that the old Doctrine was, that the Supreme Power might not be lawfully resisted in any possible Case, or upon any Pretence whatsoever, and that this was always taken to be the Doctrine of the Primitive Church and of the Church of England; and to be plainly enough asserted in the Scripture, especially by St. Paul and St. Peter in their Epistles.

A little to soften and relax so rigid a Doctrine, some (perhaps not ill-meaning) Persons ventured to purpose an Exception not found in the Scriptures, authorized either by the primitive or present Church, of a single Case, in which it should be visibly impossible by any other means to preserve the Lives and Fortunes, the Religion and Liberties of the whole Community, and to make a doubt (at least) whether Resistance in that Case might not be lawful. The next Step was to except this Case absolutely; and peremptorily to conclude Resistance lawful on the united Reasons of the Preservation of our Lives, Liberties, Properties and Religion from visible and imminent Ruin.

Afterwards these Reasons came to be divided, and a palpable Invasion upon the Rights of the whole Community in any Respect by the supreme Authority, was thought a sufficient Reason to justify Resistance.

Here a rational Man might possibly have expected a Stop, because it seems to be as much as the most pressing Necessities of a Community can require, to be *set free* from the Prohibition of Resistance in all the foregoing Instances. But alas ! the great Captain and Champion of this our Cause is advanced farther, and we must follow him ; who asserts it not to be *lawful* only, but a necessary *Duty* in all such Cases to take up the Arms of Resistance for the publick Good.

Let us now look back to the Precipice, and consider from whence we are fallen. It is not very long since Resistance of the supreme Power was commonly thought absolutely unlawful in any Case. Now it is not only thought lawful to resist the same in Defence of our Lives, and Liberties, Properties or Religion, but not to resist in Defence of either, when the Publick is attacqued in either, is accounted a *Crime* and an *Opposition to the Will of God* ; and to assert the contrary Principle, is look'd on as not only very *absurd* and *ridiculous*, but as *dangerous* and *unsafe*. But how dangerous soever it may be to assert such a Doctrine, if it be the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles (as I think it is) I am sure it must be much more dangerous, (especially to a Minister of the Gospel) to be ashamed or afraid to assert it, and maintain it too against all Opposition. And I shall therefore beg leave to say something to what has been advanced by the celebrated Patron of the Doctrine (and indeed Duty) of Resistance in the Cases before mentioned. There is one Argument above others which occurs very often in his Writings on this Subject, and in which he seems to take great Delight and Satisfaction. For he has placed it in several Lights, cloath'd it with variety of Expression, and by help of it has enervated and explained away St. Paul's Argument, (or at least what was commonly taken to be his Argument) in the 13th Chapter to the *Romans* ; and has framed an Answer from it also to several other Texts of Scripture.

The Argument is this. That it is impossible that any King, Prince, or Governour, should be the *Minister of God*, or the *Ordinance of God* ; or that he should act by *God's Authority*, or by a *Commission from him*, whilst he is oppressing and tyrannizing over his Subjects, or any longer than he consults

consults their good ; and that to assert the contrary is nothing less than Blasphemy. . The Consequence of which is this, that to resist a Prince when he acts unjustly, cannot be resisting God's Minister or Ordinance ; and that he may and ought to be resisted by the Community, when the good of the Community requires it. This seems to me to be one main Support of his Cause, and indeed that in which *his great strength lies* ; insomuch that if he should happen to be at any time deprived of it, and have utterly taken from him, he would *become weak, and like another Man.* I shall endeavour to invalidate this Argument by the following Considerations.

First, it seems to prove too much. For it will prove that the supreme Power or Governour of a Nation may be lawfully resisted on account of one single Act of Injustice, whether of a publick or private Nature, notwithstanding that St. Paul asserts such a Person to be the *Minister of God*, and to be *ordained of God*. I say, notwithstanding any Argument that can be drawn from St. Paul's calling him the *Minister or Ordinance of God*. For I acknowledge that this Author does assert in many Places, that a Prince may not be lawfully resisted on account of one single act of unjust and arbitrary Power of what nature soever ; but then he grounds this Assertion upon a quite different Reason ; not because he continues still to be the Minister of God ; but because it is not for the good of the Community to resist him on any account, except to prevent the utter Ruin of the Publick.

But it may reasonably be questioned, whether all that approve his other Notions, will agree with him in this. For if a Prince may be resisted and deposed to prevent the utter Ruin of a Community, why may he not be resisted and deposed to prevent the partial Ruin of it, or to obtain some mighty Advantage to it ? Or why should this Author think Resistance can never promote the Publick Good of a Community, but when it is made use of for its immediate Preservation ? This seems to be but an arbitrary and groundless Assertion. But if it be granted to be possible that the Publick Good may be promoted by Resistance in some Cases, besides where the immediate Preservation of the Publick is concerned, then will

it justify Resistance in those Cases also. In short, it may possibly sometimes happen, that a Prince, who is in the main good and gracious to his Subjects, may sit at the Helm of Government, at a time when the State of Affairs, and the Good of the Community require a more wise or more active Governour; and it may be possible at the same Time to displace the present Possessor without much hazard or trouble to the Community. In this Case he has nothing left to protect him but his Divine Commission and Character: and, according to this Author, he forfeits that by one single Act of arbitrary and illegal Government. But,

Secondly, let us see how this Way of arguing will hold in Cases of a private Nature. A Father has an Authority given him by God over his Children, which Authority is also given him for their good. But suppose he should have been guilty of some one act of Cruelty or Unkindness towards them; Will it follow that he has forfeited his Authority over them, and that they may lawfully resist him? It is true indeed; God has not authorized him to play the Tyrant over them, or to grieve and vex them at his Pleasure. But will his unjustifiable Behaviour towards them absolve them from the Duties of Respect and Obedience? The same may be applied to the Case of Masters and their Servants. And both these Cases being of a private Nature, no collateral Considerations of Publick Good can come in to relieve and support a distressed Argument.

Thirdly, to give a full and distinct Solution to this Fallacy. I say that the supreme Governour of a Nation is the *Minister and Ordinance of God*; that he stands invested with his Authority, and acts by virtue of a Commission from him in all his regal and publick Acts, whether they promote the good or tend to the harm of the Community: and that to assert this, does not reflect dishonour upon God, whose Minister he is, and who gave him his Commission and Authority. Indeed to affirm that God has given any Man an *Authority or Commission* to oppress and injure others, is to charge him consequentially with being the Author of Evil. But to say that he has given a Person an Authority or Commission by the *Abuse* of which he oppresses and injures Others, is not to fix any such blas-

blasphemous Charge upon him, any more than to say that God has endued Men with a Liberty of Action, by the Abuse of which they often fall into grievous Sin, would be to accuse him of being the Author of Sin, and to fix the like blasphemous Charge upon him. When a Prince oppresses his Subjects, he does not act according to the Commission God has given him, it is true ; but nevertheless he acts by *Virtue* of his Commission. And I would ask this Author whether if, in speaking of a Prince's oppressing his Subjects, one should let fall this Expression, that such a Prince abuses his Divine Commission, the expression might not be allowed to be proper : If he says it might, then I argue ; that the Abuse of a Commission supposes it ; and that no one is capable of abusing a Commission, but he that has one.

And why shall not this be as good an Argument to prove that a Prince has Commission from God, at the time he oppresses his Subjects, as to assert that a Prince cannot have a Divine Commission when he oppresses his Subjects, because God never gave any Man a Commission to oppress, is an Argument that a Tyrannical and Oppressive Prince has no such Commission. To act not according to, or even contrary to the ultimate End and Design of a Commission, and to act altogether without a Commission are certainly very different and distinct Apprehensions. For Instance, Let us suppose some Persons accusing the Deputy of a Province before his King or Emperour of Oppression : will they charge him with having acted without a Commission ? No certainly. For then it would be very easy for him to clear himself of the Accusation by producing his Commission. But they will charge him with having not acted according to, or else with having acted contrary to the Intention of it.

For I would know what it is that distinguishes a Tyrant from an Usurper, and what is the precise Conception of each, if every Prince that oppresses his Subjects be an Usurper properly speaking, as I conceive he must be if he acts without a Commission, as this Author supposes. A Prince that oppresses his Subjects is indeed a Tyrant whether he be lawfully posseſ'd of the Administration, or no. And again a Prince, not rightfully posseſ'd of the Administration, is an Usurper whether he oppresses the Community or no. From whence it follows, that an Intruder and wrongful Posſessor, as he is undoubtedly an Usurper, so he may become a Tyrant too be Male-Administration : but a rightful and lawful Prince can never become an Usurper by Male-Administration, unless a Tyrant and an Usurper be one and the same Notion and Thing. In a Word ; Oppression with a Commission is meer Oppression, but Oppression without a Commission is not only bare Oppression, but implys in it the notion of Usurpation also. The one is a single, the other a complicated Crime. For to govern without a Commission, altho' a Man should govern well, is it self a Crime. The Summ of all is this ; that the Fallacy lies altogether in the manner of Expression. To assert that God has given to Princes an Authority or Commission to oppress their Subjects, is highly reflecting on his honour ; but to assert that he has given them a Commission or Authority (not to oppress, but) to govern their Subjects, by virtue of which they too often oppress them ; Or, which is the same thing, that they are the

the Ministers of God even whilst they oppress them, has nothing formidable in it. However, to remove all scruple of this kind, I shall endeavour,

Fourthly, to justify this way of Expression by Examples of it in Scripture. The first is that of David, who called Saul the Lord's anointed (which Expression answers to St. Paul's Minister or Ordinance of God) at the very

Time he was pursuing his Life, and a little after he had
 * *I Sam. 22. Cb.* slain fourscore and five Priests of the Lord,* and put a whole City, Men, Women, and Children to the Sword, only for having supplied him with Bread, and necessary subsistence : *Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?* In the 26th Chapter of the 1st Book of Samuel at the 9th Verse. And before in the 24th Chapter at the 5th and 6th Verses, when he had cut off Saul's Skirt, the Text says, *that his Heart smote him*; and that he said to his Men, *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my Master the Lord's anointed; to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.* From whence I argue, that it was David's Opinion, at least, that his Divine Commission continued notwithstanding his Male-Administration, and that there was no harm in calling him the *Lord's anointed* whilst he was acting and contriving such abominable Cruelty and Injustice.

And here I can't but take notice, that this Advocate for the Doctrine of Resistance having undertaken to consider David's Example, and being

hard press'd by it, and labouring to relieve himself from
 † Mr. Hoadly's Measures of Submis. 2d. Edit. P. 128. it, has dropt this unlucky expression,† that it would have been the highest Crime in David to have killed a Man whom he knew God had appointed to reign. What ?

Had God appointed Saul to reign, and had he still the Divine Authority and Commission when he had been guilty of so much Tyranny and Injustice? Was he still the Minister and Ordinance of God? Why else would it have been so high a Crime in David to have killed him? Surely not because he would have done much mischief to the Publick by it. Thus has this renowned Author kindly made himself partaker of the same Blasphemy, which he so unkindly charges upon others.

Another Example of this way of Expression is our blessed Lord himself, who acknowledged Pilate the Governour's Power to be from God, a little before he pass'd the most unjust Sentence of Condemnation upon him, in the 19th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, at the 10th and 11th Verses. *Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have Power to crucifie thee, and have Power to release thee?* Jesus answered, *Thou couldst have no Power against me, unless it was given thee from above.*

Now whether our Blessed Saviour is to be understood here to mean, that Pilate was particularly design'd, and mark'd out by God to be the Instrument of our Salvation, by condemning the Lord of Life, and putting him to Death, and for that Reason God had raised him up (as he is said to have done

done *Pharaoh* on another account) and set him over the Province of *Judea*; or whether he only recognizes *Pilate's* Authority to hear and judge his Cause as he was the lawful Gover-nour of that Province, without intimating any particular Designation of him to such a Purpose, it is all one to the matter in hand. The words taken either way amount to an ac-knowledgment of a lawful Power and Authority in the Go-vernor over him. If then our blessed Saviour declared *Pilate* to act by virtue of a Divine Power and Commission when he sat to judge him, and was just about to pass the most unjust Judgment of Death upon him, then most assuredly it is not Blasphemy to assert that Princes and Governours act (tho' con-trary to the intent of, yet) by virtue of a Divine Power and Commission, when they are guilty of the most grievous Op-pressions and Invasions upon the Rights and Privileges of Subjects.

I am not ignorant that the aforementioned Author has con-sidered this Text also; and that he says up-on it, that **whatsoever Power comes to Men by the Providence of God, is given them from above, and such (he says) Pilate's Power was.*

* Measures of
Submission,
P. 121, 122.

But what would he be understood to mean by this doubtful Expression? Does he mean that all Power which comes to Men by the bare *Permission* of Divine Providence (such for Instance as is the Power of High-way men and Robbers over innocent Persons) is given them from above? Besides other Incon-veniences of such an Interpretation, it renders our Saviour's Answer to *Pilate* poor and jejune sense. But if *Pilate's* Pow-er came not to him by bare *Permission*, but by *Appointment* of Providence (as it undoubtedly did, supposing him to have been a lawful Magistrate) then our Saviour's Answer implies thus much; that he was willing to acknowledge *Pilate's* Authority to try him to be from God, even altho' he should abuse that Authority by condemning him unjustly; as he knew he would. Nor does this Interpretation infer (as this Au-thor would have it) that there was any thing in *Pilate's* Com-mission as a Governor, to justify him in his unjust Proceed-ings: It only justifies his Commission, not his Proceedings up-on

on it ; Or, in other words, it only shews that his Crime did not lie in taking upon him to try a Cause that did not belong to his Jurisdiction, and of which therefore he ought not to have taken Cognizance, but in a wrong and unjust Determination of a Cause that came regularly before him.

I hope what I have said in Opposition to this Author will not be thought altogether a Digression, since my first Design led the Way towards it; nor is it at all foreign to the particular Occasion of this Day's Solemnity, or the present Posture of the Times. I am sensible that answering one Argument alone (how popular and prevailing soever) tho' it may weaken, yet will not overthrow a Cause. That I leave as the Business of a much larger Discourse and much abler Pen.

But after all what can be said for it, the Doctrine of Non-Resistance is too much a Doctrine of the Cross not to meet with great Opposition from the Prejudices and Passions of Men. Flesh and Blood and corrupt Reason will set up the great Law of Self-Preservation against it, and find a thousand Absurdities and Contradictions in it. And when Men are disposed to an universal Latitude both in Opinion and Practice, it is impossible to preach such rigorous Doctrines without disobliging; especially if it be done with Boldness and Authority. Without doubt at such Seasons it is both the safest, and most compendious way to Preferment to glaze and fall in with the Corruptions of Humane Nature: And he that is resolved to adhere firmly to the Duty of his Function, and to bear up bravely against the Torrent, hath nothing left to do, but to take up his Cross, and look beyond this World to that Crown of Life and Glory which our Saviour will give to those that continue faithful unto Death. If the Apostle's Prophecy be fulfilled, and the Time is come when Men will not endure sound Doctrine, we cannot help it. We are appointed to feed the Flock of Christ, to be instant in Season and out of Season, to Reprove, Rebuke and Exhort with all Authority, to contend earnestly for the Divine Mysteries and Precepts, and to watch for their Souls, who watch for our Ruin.

Nor let us think it enough that we hold our Peace in this evil Day, and do not concur when the sacred Truths are openly attacqued, lest we should be interpreted at the great and terrible Day of the Lord to have been ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, to have betrayed our Holy Religion, and tamely given up those valuable things for which so many before us have gloriously died; and lastly, lest we should have a Portion allotted us with our Adversaries. For the Fearful as well as the Unbelieving shall have their Part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death, Rev. 21. 8. From which God of his infinite Mercy deliver both us, and them, for the Merits and thro' the Mediation of his dear Son : To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be ascribed all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. Amen.